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DREW PEARSON 5-13/25/69

King Conspiracy Discarded by FBI

WASHINGTON—Despite James Earl Ray's courtroom hint that others helped to plot the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the FBI's painstaking \$3.5 million investigation of the shooting produced absolutely no evidence of a conspiracy.

This column has checked carefully into all the conspiracy angles. I even flew to Los Angeles to investigate a dentist who was reported to have a grudge against Dr. King and might have hired Ray to gun down the Negro leader. Here are the conclusions:

1. Ray was a racist with a long record of crime and hate. He made no secret in prison of his burning hatred for Negroes. He even refused to go to the prison's honor farm because he would have to work alongside blacks. He also boasted to fellow convicts that he would kill Dr. King when he got out of prison.

2. Ray flew to Los Angeles around Easter Sunday, 1967, because he heard Dr. King was scheduled to speak there. Ray did not contact the Los Angeles dentist and the FBI quickly dropped its suspicions of the dentist. Ray continued to stalk Dr. King until the tragic day in Memphis.

3. Ray's hints that he was aided by conspirators apparently were motivated by a psychotic notion that he could invent a couple of non-existent persons and blame them for the actual shooting, thus avoiding the death penalty.

4. Ray spoke mysteriously, for example, of meeting a blond man by the name of "Raoul" in a New Orleans bar. Later this same mystery man was supposed to have turned up in Montreal while Ray was there. The FBI could find no evidence that

"Raoul" ever existed outside of Ray's imagination.

5. The fact that Ray seemed to have plenty of cash caused the FBI to suspect at first that he may have collected a pay-off from someone who wanted Dr. King dead. The FBI was able to trace Ray's money back to profits from smuggling narcotics into prison, and to a series of holdups. He staged at least two robberies in this country, two in Canada, one in London and one in Portugal.

6. Although Ray bungled the shooting by leaving clues that easily would have convicted him, he had a twisted cunning that enabled him to throw the FBI off his track while he escaped the country. There is no evidence to support the rumor that the alleged conspirators hustled him off to Europe.

Clearly, James Earl Ray loves the limelight and he can be expected to make statements that will keep his name in the newspapers. Those who know him say he almost looked forward to re-

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turning to prison as a celebrity.

NOTE: The whispers of conspiracy, however, continue to circulate. They have been spread in part by Dr. King's former associates in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, who have found it easier to raise money with the conspiracy talk in the air.

THE STORY can be told of Lyndon Johnson's new year's resolution to chop another \$8 billion off his budget.

He invited Nixon's secre-

tary of the treasury, David Kennedy, to the LBJ ranch on New Year's Eve to discuss the plan, which would have called for drastic cuts in such government programs as farm subsidies. However, these programs are established by law and cannot be reduced without getting special legislation from Congress.

Kennedy agreed to use his influence with Nixon to continue the surtax, so Johnson could leave the White House with a budget surplus. Kennedy flatly refused, however, to condone budget cuts contrary to the existing laws.

He warned bluntly that he would have to blast these cuts if LBJ tried to claim them as part of his final budget. The former president desperately wanted to electrify the nation by leaving a record budget surplus. But the mild-mannered Kennedy wouldn't let him get away with it.

A WORK pattern is gradually emerging for President Nixon. During his first two months in the White House, he issued more than 30 directives to department heads demanding answers to controversial questions.

He ordered Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird to report back on what to do about the anti-ballistic missile system and how to get rid of the draft, asked Secretary of HTW Robert Finch for reports on the rising costs of Medicare and Southern compliance with school desegregation law.

From Attorney General John Mitchell, Nixon sought a report on how to reform the electoral college system.

He also requested recommendations on a number of other issues such as continuing the income surtax, reorganizing the antiproverty program, handling air traffic congestion and fighting crime. The directives were routed through Arthur Burns, who appears to be emerging as Nixon's chief of staff. Unlike former President Eisenhower, who wanted to see only the majority views of his subordinates, Nixon wants to see all the minority reports as well.